JANUARY 2025

Rock Talk

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Garnet

The name “garnet” originates from the medieval Latin granatus, meaning “pomegranate,” in reference to the similarity of the red color.

Garnets have been used since the Bronze Age as gemstones and abrasives. Necklaces studded with red garnets adorned the pharaohs of ancient Egypt. Signet rings in ancient Rome featured garnet intaglios that were used to stamp the wax that secured important documents. The clergy and nobility of the Middle Ages had a preference for red garnets.

Garnet is actually a group of several minerals. Five of these – pyrope, almandine, spessartine, grossular and andradite – are important as gems. Pyrope and almandine range from purple to red. Spessartine is found in exciting oranges and yellows, while andradite is mostly yellow to green (the gem variety demantoid). Grossular may have the widest range, from colorless through yellow to reddish orange and orangy red, as well as a strong vibrant green called tsavorite.

Garnets come from many different regions and countries. Bohemia was the primary source of the red pyrope garnets so popular during Victorian times. Today, the African continent supplies much of the world’s garnet. Namibia is now producing demantoids, and most of the bright green tsavorites in the market come from Kenya, Tanzania and Madagascar. Namibia and Tanzania are also key sources of the rich orange-to-yellow spessartine garnets.

For many years, Southern California’s Little Three mining area was known for producing this spellbinding gem, The birthstone for January is also found in Myanmar, Brazil, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka, among other countries.

This Month's Roundup of Stories

- Garnet
- Gem and Mineral Show
- Secretary's Report
- 1800 Year-old Gold Ring
- Game of Stones
- Meeting Courtesy/Rock Bingo Rules
- Mineral, Crystal or Gemstone?
- Chiastolite Stone
- Bench Tips

January’s Birthstone - Garnet

The different types of garnet range between 6.5 and 7.5 on the Mohs scale of hardness. This means that this birthstone is more susceptible to damage than rubies, sapphires and diamonds. So while not all garnets are good candidates for daily wear, they are ideal for earrings, brooches and pendants. Give thought to how you store your garnet jewelry. If you let it rub against harder gems – again, think diamonds, rubies and sapphires – it can be scratched. And in turn garnet can scratch softer gems, such as opals or pearls.

Read the entire article at *GIA.edu*

Annual Gem and Mineral Show

A very big thank you to everyone who had a part in our annual Gem and Mineral Show.
To all of you who volunteered, THANK YOU!
To all of our vendors, THANK YOU!
To everyone who came to the show, THANK YOU!
We sold out every vendor table.
Next year will be our 50th annual show, so let's make it our best show ever!!

Clubhouse Address:
3357 Susan Dr.
Spring Hill, FL 34606

Secretary's Report

Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson
Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting - Minutes
Date 12-11-24

The meeting was called to order by President Anthony Maffatone at 7:04pm.
We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.
There was 1 new member to recognize: Bonnie Seema
There were 4 guests in attendance: Mike, Zach, John and Sabina.
James Roush made a motion to accept the minutes of our November meeting as printed in the newsletter, Michele Evans seconded. Passed by all members.
Treasurer Janet Wheeler gave the Treasurer's report. Leslie Newberry made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report subject to audit. Seconded by Heidi Hale. Approved by all.
President Maffatone began by thanking all the volunteers that helped out at the Gem Show to make it a success!
Gem show co-chair, Janice Wojcik stood and thanked the volunteers as well and reminded members that 2025 will be our 50th Gem Show. She stressed that ALL members will be needed to make our 50 th show the best ever!
Roberta Oldread announced that she had tried to boost the club Facebook page for this year, but found that she had been removed as an admin on the page without notice. She stated that she felt the page had not been boosted enough and that is why show attendance was down. President Maffatone stated that many shows were down because of the hurricanes and their aftermath. He suggested that we all try to improve our communication as a club.
There was a suggestion to create a Social Media committee.
President Maffatone said we should put up an Event page right now to build interest for December.
He went on to say: "After the meeting tonight, come talk to me if you are interested in helping set up the Gem Show FaceBook page or helping with Instagram or Show marketing.

If you are interested in helping out with classes or teaching something, silver-work, chain work, wire wrapping, whatever it is, let us know. We are going to put together a catalog including anyone that has a skill of sorts or knows information like gem ID, things like that, that want to share or teach. That way we can bring it to all of our members. That way we can all get more active and we can all progress. If you have been to William Holland in the past, and you have not given a presentation or taught a class, begin thinking about that because we do need to educate our fellow members who have never been there about that wonderful opportunity. Remember, we do look at volunteers first when we give away those scholarships every year. We will be talking about the William Holland Scholarships in the next few months."

That way we can all get more active and we can all progress. If you have been to William Holland in the past, and you have not given a presentation or taught a class, begin thinking about that because we do need to educate our fellow members who have never been there about that wonderful opportunity. Remember, we do look at volunteers first when we give away those scholarships every year. We will be talking about the William Holland Scholarships in the next few months."

President Maffatone announced the rock swap that is being held at the meeting tonight and reminded everyone that the annual election of officers and board members is being held tonight. He reminded everyone of the "Game of Stones" and our annual party at the coming January meeting and encouraged everyone to attend.
Hunter Mellring made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Janet Wheeler seconded, passed by all.
Meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson

1,800-year-old gold ring with 'Venus the Victorious' carving discovered in France

Archaeologists in France have discovered an 1,800-year-old gold ring with a chiseled portrait of Venus, a Roman goddess associated with victory in battle, in addition to a handful of coins from a much later era, when the Carolingian Empire ruled the region.

The ring was found in an "exceptional state of preservation" near the town of Pacé, in Brittany, according to a translated statement from the French National Institute of Preventive Archaeological Research (INRAP). Its gemstone bears a carving of Venus Victrix, which translates to "Venus the Victorious," according to INRAP. The gemstone is a nicolo, or a type of onyx that is cut so it has a faint bluish layer over a thicker layer of black. This centerpiece is framed in gold, with linear patterns etched around it.

The ring dates to the second or third century A.D., when the Roman Empire ruled the region, which explains why it was discovered on a Roman road. The road still has ruts, which indicate that wheeled vehicles travelled along it, probably to service people who lived in a nearby settlement. It's unknown who the ring belongs to or how it ended up on the Roman road.

At the same site, archaeologists also discovered the remains of a medieval hamlet that flourished around 1,300 years ago.
Archaeologists at the site found the remnants of houses, farmers' fields, pastures and underground silos used for storage. It seems that the buildings were constructed using earth, wood, plaster and adobe, while the roofs were made with plant-based materials.

The most "exceptional" discovery from this layer was a dozen coins that date to the ninth to 10th centuries A.D. that were deposited together.

Read the article at LiveScience.com

GAME OF STONES
WINTER IS COMING.
That means it's time for the Annual Withlacoochee Rockhounds Bingo Tournament.
A battle of fire and ice, where everybody wins and goes home with a prize!
Bring a wrapped, rock-themed gift to the next meeting
on Wednesday, January 8th and prepare to battle.
And, the club is providing a banquet of eats fit for a king or kaleesi.
What will your Dragon eat? Whatever he wants. Dracarys!

Winter is Coming!

It's time for the Annual Withlacoochee Rockhounds Bingo Tournament.
We call it Game of Stones.
It's a battle of fire and ice, where everyone wins, and goes home with a prize.
Bring a wrapped, rock-themed gift to our meeting on
Wednesday, January 8th.
Note, this meeting starts at 6PM, not 7PM

The club is providing a banquet fit for a king of kaleesi.

Come and do battle.
Who will win the Game of Stones?

Rules of Rock Bingo (Game of Stones)

Your Board has changed the rules slightly to make this game more enjoyable for everyone!

Each player, must bring at least 1 wrapped gift. Rock related is good, it doesn't have to be expensive, but something a rockhound would like. If you want to bring more than 1, pleasefeel free.

One bingo card for each player. Straight line bingo only – Vertical, horizontal or X.
4 corners is not a bingo.

When you get a bingo, you will read your numbers back to the caller to make sure it's correct.
After you're confirmed, you pick 1 present from the prize table. Take it back to your seat and place it in front of you on your table. NO hiding presents, NO opening and NO peeking!

After all the presents have been chosen from the prize table, if you get a bingo, you may "steal" a gift from someone else that is over 18 years old.

When someone gets a "cover" (all spaces on card covered) the game ends.
When the game is over, do not open your presents!!!

Any player that does not have a present at the end of the game will be allowed to take 1 present from any player over 18 that has multiple gifts.

That way, everyone who brought a gift, goes home with a gift and everyone has a good time!

We will go over these rules again before we start the game.

Monthly Meeting Courtesy

Our monthly meetings are a time for members to get together to share their love of rocks, minerals and fossils. It is a chance to learn from each other, teach each other and bond with people that have common interests. It's also a time for the club to conduct a business meeting, during which club Officers and Directors inform club members of changes that have happened or are proposed to happen in the future to club procedure or rules.

It is a time for announcements of coming classes, programs, scholarships, and special events.
It may be a time for discussion on a topic if it is of concern to a majority of members present.
Members may also share experiences and news of interest to other members.
Our monthly meetings should always be a time of sharing, education and entertainment.

We should all show respect and consideration for each other at our meetings, especially for the Facilitator of the meeting, whether it be our President or one of our other Officers. This respect has been lacking in our meetings for several months now. A few attendees have been speaking out without being recognized, shouting, and making inappropriate comments. This not only disrupts our meetings but makes members, new and old, feel uneasy and uncomfortable. It makes our club seem very unprofessional and is disrespectful to the Officers, Directors, and your fellow members.

Going forward, our Board has decided to strive for a more business-like atmosphere while our business meetings are in order. If you are an attending member and have a question or comment, please raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Facilitator of the meeting. After you are acknowledged and speak, if you later have something else to add, please raise your hand and again be recognized to speak. Please be respectful and polite when you are addressing the Officers and Directors, who volunteer their time, work tirelessly, and make every effort to keep this club alive and prosperous.

We feel this will make for a smoother meeting with all members being heard. No members will be shouted over and no members will feel over run with chaotic outbursts. We will all feel a part of the meeting and will learn more about what our club is doing for and with us.

What's The Difference Between A Mineral, A Crystal, And A Gemstone?

We humans are a bit magpie-ish when it comes to the environment, our eyes growing big and greedy when we spot shiny things sticking out of rocks. Take a walk down the mineralogy collection of any good natural history museum and your face will be aglow with the sparkle of minerals, crystals, and gemstones – but what's the difference between the three?

What is a mineral?

Minerals are generally inorganic, naturally occurring solids (though we humans have had a stab at creating our own in the lab) that have a specific chemical composition and atomic structure.

Their ordered atomic arrangements are why most minerals have a crystal structure, as repeating units layer up. There are a few rare exceptions for solids that are considered minerals and have an amorphous (non-crystalline) structure. One way they can form is through rapid cooling which means they don't develop in the repeated units that define true crystals, but it's up for debate if you can technically have an "amorphous mineral".

What is a crystal?

Crystals are characterized by their highly ordered atomic arrangements, forming as repeated units in what's known as a crystal lattice, creating those pointy faceted protrusions we humans love.

You can get a good idea of a crystal's structure by looking closely at just a small piece of it, as the repeating units all follow the same structure. They're not living, but scientists often describe them as "growing" because their development can be dependent on environmental conditions, their unique composition, and how much space they have.

What is a gemstone?

Gemstones are precious or semi-precious stones that have been cut and polished by humans for use in things like jewelry and research. Some gemstones are also minerals, such as that classic rock diamond, but there are some gemstones that aren't classed as minerals. A fancy example is pearl, a popular choice in the jewelry industry. That's because they contain the protein conchiolin, something that's crucial to the formation of the pearl but is a biological material, so the pearl can't be a mineral.

Read the article at *IFLScience.com*

How Rocks And Minerals Give Fireworks Their Colors

There would be no bright and colorful fireworks without rocks and minerals.

A firework is produced by launching a shell containing fuel and a color mix high into the air, where it explodes. This explosion propels brightly burning particles in all directions, creating streaks of light in the air.

Mixing coal with saltpeter creates gunpowder, the most basic firework fuel used already in ancient China. Nitratine, a highly reactive mineral, is the natural form of sodium-nitrate utilized as an oxidizer in fireworks, supporting the combustion of the fuel.

The vibrant colors in a firework don't come directly from the burning fuel, as burning gunpowder results only in a weak yellow, but metallic minerals that are deliberately added to the mix. As the fuel burns at a very high temperature of over 1,000 degrees Celsius, the atoms in the crystal structure release energy emitting a specific wavelength of light that we perceive as a distinct color.

The element barium produces green light. Barium is obtained from the barium-sulfate baryte. The baryte group also includes the strontium-sulfate mineral celestite. Strontium is one of the most abundant elements in the Earth's crust. However, only two carbonate minerals—celestite and strontianite—contain enough strontium for commercial use. Celestite is named for its sky-blue color and is the principal source for strontium, an element that produces red light if burned in a firework.

Burning magnesium, titanium and aluminum will emit a bright white light, adding brightness to a firework. Aluminum and magnesium also will significantly heat up the burning mix, reaching temperatures of almost 2,000 degrees Celsius.

Read the entire article at *Forbes.com*

Field Trips

"Note: The Withlacoochee Rockhounds Club does not sponsor field trips other than trips that are sanctioned by the SFMS (The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies).

Our club insurance is through SFMS and does not cover excursions not listed on their website as safe."

The SFMS insurance covers the property owner where members might go, but not the club members.

Man Keeps a Rock For Years Hoping It's Gold. It Turns Out to Be Far More Valuable

In 2015, David Hole was prospecting in Maryborough Regional Park near Melbourne, Australia. Armed with a metal detector, he discovered something out of the ordinary – a very heavy, reddish rock resting in some yellow clay. He took it home and tried everything to open it, sure that there was a gold nugget inside the rock – after all, Maryborough is in the Goldfields region, where the Australian gold rush peaked in the 19th century.

To break open his find, Hole tried a rock saw, an angle grinder, a drill, even dousing the thing in acid. However, not even a sledgehammer could make a crack.

That's because what he was trying so hard to open was no gold nugget. As he found out years later, it was a rare meteorite. It weighs a whopping 17 kilograms (37.5 pounds), and after using a diamond saw to cut off a small slice, the researchers discovered its composition had a high percentage of iron, making it a H5 ordinary chondrite.

Once open, you can also see the tiny crystallized droplets of metallic minerals throughout it, called chondrules.

Read the entire article at *Sciencealert.com*

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Our monthly club meeting is held at the Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club, 3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com

Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month. Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

Advertisers Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the *Rock Talk* and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the *Rock Talk* and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club treasure Janet Wheeler: ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earrth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, and workshops. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.

Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues

Dues are $35.00 annually for adults, and $5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

Club Meeting Location and Time

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3375 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

2025 Club Officers and Appointees

President	Anthony Maffatone	352.397.7694	anthonymaffatone@gmail.com
Vice President	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com

Anthony Maffatone (President) Michael Steverson (Vice President) Melodye Steverson (Secretary) Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Hunter Mellring Leslie Newberry Roger Wheeler James Roush Ralph Barber (Past President)

Bench Tips from Brad Smith

Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

DEPTH GAUGE FOR DRILLING

Sometimes you need to drill a number of holes all to the same depth. One quick and easy way to do this is to wind some tape around the drill bit so that the tape just touches the part surface when the hole is deep enough.

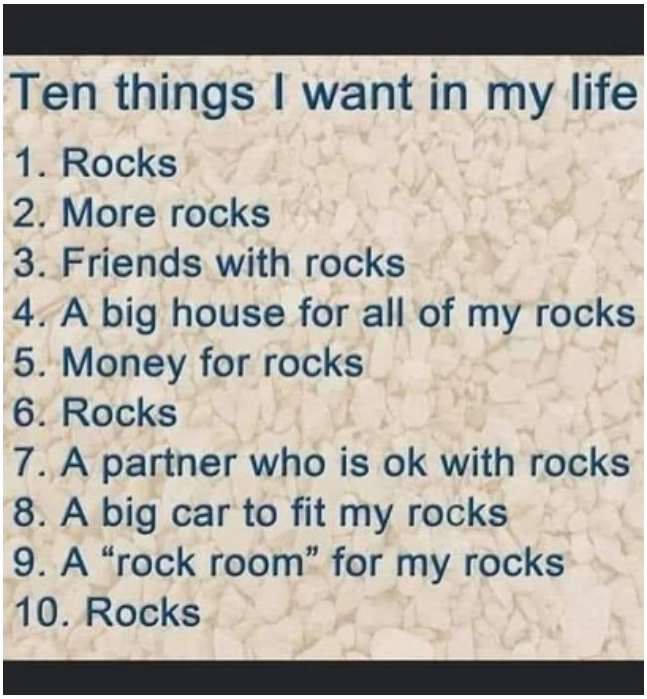
You can set the depth either by measuring from the tip of the drill to the tape or by drilling to the correct depth, leaving the bit in the hole, and wrapping tape around the bit at the surface level.

Note that a little extra tape left free on the end will blow away debris from the drilling.

Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books

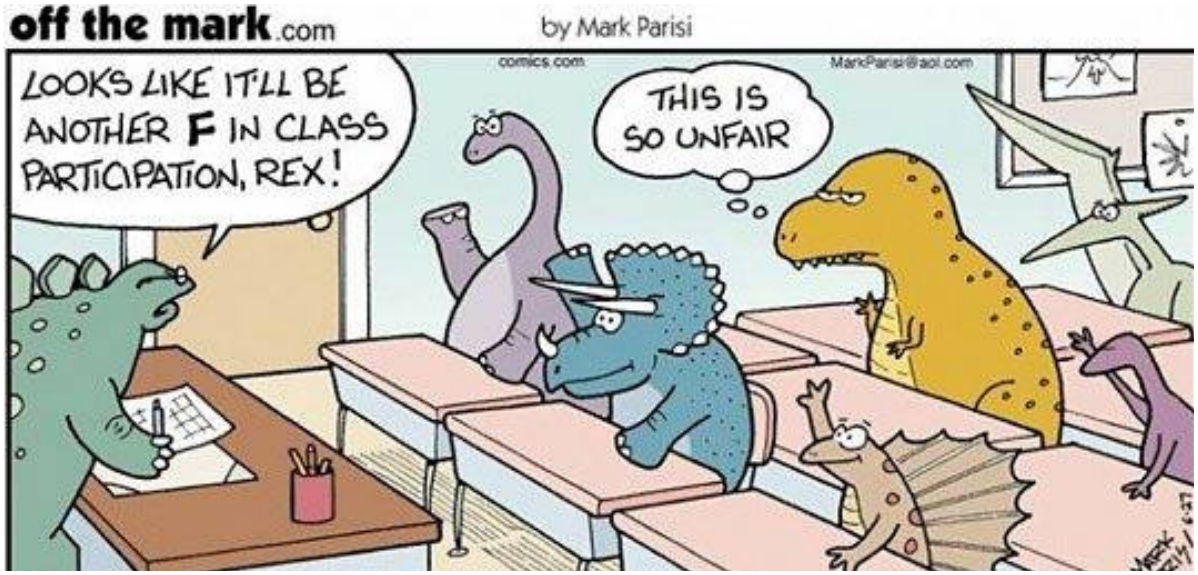
Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith

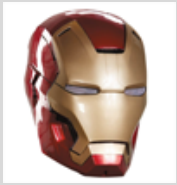
Rock Talk Funny Papers


Ten things I want in my life
1. Rocks
2. More rocks
3. Friends with rocks
4. A big house for all of my rocks
5. Money for rocks
6. Rocks
7. A partner who is ok with rocks
8. A big car to fit my rocks
9. A "rock room" for my rocks
10. Rocks

THE JEWELER
BY TIM SEARFOSS
MY MOTHER'S EMERALD HAS BEEN IN THE FAMILY FOR FOUR GENERATIONS.
BUT, I DROPPED IT, AND IT BROKE. CAN YOU MELT IT BACK TOGETHER PLEASE?

How to break a jeweler's brain.





From The Editor

Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

Thank you to everyone who was a part of our 49th annual Gem and Mineral Show. Your help and your attendance were instrumental in the show being a success. Next year is our 50th annual show and we want to make it huge. Planning is already underway, so stay tuned!

Our January meeting features the return of our famous (or infamous??) Game of Stones.
In a past life, it was known as Rock Bingo.
Be sure to attend, all active members can play, and everyone goes home with something. See page 6 of this newsletter for game rules.
For this meeting, the club will provide food and drink. We will be starting the meeting at 6PM instead of our normal 7PM to allow time to eat before beginning the Game of Stones.

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

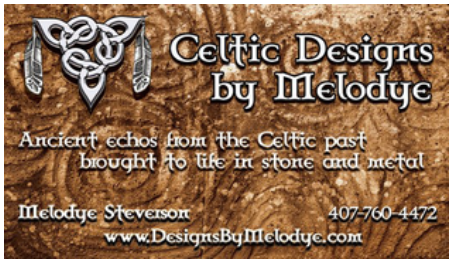
Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.
These are SCAMS.
Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monitary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.

Rockhounds Advertisers



FOREVERMORE CRYSTALS
8255 COMMERCIAL WAY
WEEKI WACHEE, FL 34613
352-423-1311
CRYSTALS, JEWELRY, INCENSE, SAGE, TAROT, TAPESTRIES,
FOSSILS, METEORITES, RAW STONES, & SO MUCH MORE
NOT YOUR AVERAGE ROCK SHOP
Show Your Rockhounds Club Membership Card for a Discount

Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month.
Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

Advertisers Are Needed
Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.
The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.
Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.
Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Membership Form - 2025

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
Hernando County FL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name _____

Partner's Full Name
* If both applying for membership _____

Child's Full Name
* If under 18, and applying with parent _____

Street Address _____

City _____

State / ZIP _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Annual Membership Dues:

*Choose your type of membership

- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea

☐ Returning Member?

☐ New Member?

If you are applying, for example, as husband, wife and child (under 18), then fill in full name, partner's name and child's name above. Then, choose two individual memberships to the left, along with an under 18 membership.

Give this completed form, along with your check (made payable to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds") or credit card for dues to Club Secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or, you may mail the form to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634